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SUBJECT: CHAD FOREIGN MINISTER: GIVE BORDER MONITORING MORE
TEETH

CLASSIFIED BY DCM LUCY TAMLYN FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a wide ranging meeting with Chad Foreign Minister Allam-mi the Ambassador broached the topic of what messages the United States might usefully convey to Chadian rebels that approached us. Allam-mi urged commitment to the Sirte accords and asked for U.S. assistance in putting in place the border monitoring called for in the Dakar accord. Allam-mi recalled that President Deby was still very interested in an official visit to Washington, and asked for an update on the C-130 sale. We think it was useful to have broached the subject of U.S. messages to the Chadian rebel chiefs: the GOC now knows how we are trying to help them in this regard, and can engage us on implementation - if it so chooses. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The Ambassador met with Chadian Foreign Minister Allam-mi on March 26 in his newly refurnished office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (looters had completely emptied his office in the aftermath of the February 2-3 attacks). DCM (notetaker) and Youssef Konte, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended.

¶3. SBU) The Ambassador opened by reiterating that the United States supported Chad's legitimate right of self-defense against aggression supported by a neighbor. He explained that the United States was looking for ways to diminish the tension between Chad and Sudan, but that the first step was for the attacks to stop. He urged strengthening of the Chadian state by the creation of more political space and allowing for a more participatory political system. He recalled that these points had been raised by Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) Jim Swan in his recent meeting with President Deby.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador informed Allam-mi that Ambassador Bechir had conveyed a message from President Deby indicating that he would appreciate U.S. support in negotiations with Chadian rebels. President Deby had also mentioned his plans for a new Government of "National Opening." The Ambassador had three questions in this regard:

-- What message would be useful to send the rebels?
-- What flexibility did the Chadian state have in order to persuade the rebels to lay down their arms and enter into a political dialogue?
-- What can US do to facilitate a political opening which would strengthen Chadian state?

REBEL DISUNITY

¶5. (C) Foreign Minister Allam-mi thanked the Ambassador for the U.S. condemnation of the recent attacks. He provided a recording and a transcript of a conversation between Sudan Intelligence Chief Saleh Gosh and Chadian rebel leader Mohamat Nouri dating from last week in which Gosh encouraged him said to "attack quickly while the President goes to France for medical treatment." However, this attack did not take place because the groups could not decide who would be the leader. Even within the UFDD there were divisions. Allam-mi commented that Nouri was sufficiently well-equipped to attack, but he was not ready (despite Sudanese pressure). Right now the RFC was negotiating; the Ouaddaian group was tired of being used in the service of others and also was talking to the Government. Allam-mi stated that former Ambassador Soubiane was the recent arrival in the rebel fold and was supported by the janjaweed (who shared his Arab ethnicity).

¶6. (C) Turning to the question of how to help diminish tensions between Chad and Sudan, Allam-mi acknowledged that "it was true Chad should not be supporting Sudanese rebels," but he asked that Chad's minimal support - practically limited to simple hospitality -- be contrasted to Sudan's disproportionate actions in favor of Chadian rebels. Across the border, the Chadian rebels were totally dependent on Sudan for everything from food to fuel. If the Government of Sudan "stopped feeding them for 24 hours" they would be ready to negotiate out of hunger.

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE BORDER MONITORING

¶7. (C) One of the biggest problems, according to Allam-mi, was the lack of effective border monitoring. Although this was mentioned in all of the accords (Dakar, Riyadh, Sirte),

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it had never been implemented. Libyan/Eritrean monitoring after the Tripoli Accord had been nothing more than the stationing of some intelligence officers in Abeche. Effective border monitoring required a neutral, effective, international force at the border. The United States could help drum up support from the AU, from CEN-SAD and from the CEEAC countries to set up an observer force.

¶8. (C) As far as rebels, Allam-mi said clearly: "tell them to live up to their commitments in the Sirte Accord." The agreements promised them jobs and funding. It allowed their cadres to return to former positions or be given new ones. Those who chose to be politically active could participate in the August 13 follow-up process. Concerning the possibility of a new government, Allam-mi stated that it needed to be more than just a dividing up of the pie. The President needed to be given latitude to choose those who would govern well, and would set the country on the path towards elections and rule by democracy rather than arms. Allam-mi rejected the idea of a new inclusive roundtable (similar to the national convention held in the mid-1990's to draft a new constitution). He argued that questioning the validity of government institutions at this stage was counterproductive; maybe after the rebels had put down arms some questions could be raised, but the needed to respect the current constitution. He also cautioned that civil society and the political opposition - by advocating for an inclusive dialogue - were running the risk of being squeezed out "as was the case in Cote D'Ivoire" where those with the arms simply divided up the pie.

¶9. (SBU) Regarding "power-sharing," Allam-mi said that this was unworkable and unnecessary. The rebels should implement Sirte, then join in the political debate inside Chad under the August 13 Accord. If they wanted power, they would have to compete for it in the 2009 and 2011 elections, as foreseen by the August 13 Accord.

PLANES AND VISITS

¶10. (SBU) Turning to Chadian charges that the Government of Sudan was providing Chinese weaponry to the Chadian rebels, and the U.S request to examine these items first-hand, Foreign Minister Allam-mi encouraged the Embassy Defense Attache to work with the Ministry of Defense to view the items. In closing, the Foreign Minister reminded the Ambassador that the President still sought a visit to the United States, and that the request for new C-130's was still very much on his mind.

COMMENT:

¶11. (C) Allam-mi's analysis of dissension within rebel ranks indicates that the GOC "intra-Chadian diplomacy" has had some success. But the initiative still lies with the rebels. They will decide when and where to strike - or not to strike at all. We think it was useful to have broached the subject of U.S. messages to the Chadian rebel chiefs: the GOC now knows how we are trying to help them in this regard, and can engage us on implementation - if it so chooses. Embassy subsequently reached out to rebels in UFDD-F and FRS in synch with demarches made from the Department.

¶12. (C) We expect more queries on the C-130's and need information on where this process lies and the suitability for Chadian needs (or cheaper alternatives that might be delivered sooner - such as C-27s.) A visit to the United States by President Deby provides an opportunity for impressing upon him the key elements of our Chad policy at the highest possible levels of our government.

NIGRO